

## IQBAL'S THOUGHT AND CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this paper is to throw light on Iqbal 's relevance as a poet of current time. Iqbal who is also called " poet of the East" has contributed to the creative literature as well as to philosophy of life. In the contemporary society, values are governed by individual choices and traditional stereotypes. Values are culture dependant and tend to appear conservative for present age. Traditionalists are at loggerheads with modernists and may even call them fundamentalist in nature. But, the former know that their value system is more resistant to a rapid change whereas modernistic fads although not totally inappropriate pass rarely from one generation to other.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Degeneration, Values, Religion Contemporary, Spirituality & Emancipation*

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### INTRODUCTION

What is modern today appears obsolete tomorrow. Technology is a best example of this. A computer looks in many ways obsolete in front of a smart phone, although whether we can compare values with technology is another issue. Iqbal views were traditional yet he was a true modernist of his era. His thoughts and views reflected his vision for a modernist Muslim youth and his dreams for a society within the realms of Islam. Iqbal's view of Islam was based on his deep understanding of Quran, which supported rethinking on traditional values, with a scientific approach. The transition from a placid, traditional society to a modernistic society had to be peaceful. And, the old values which had the benefit of serving the society were imbibed in the renewed value system. The traditional pre-Islamic tribal society with blood feuds was blended in the refreshed value system, resulting in social cohesion. The transaction was largely peaceful, and it affected Iqbal deeply, the blend of the traditional and modern. The social cohesion brought about in deserts of Arabia had a global impact. From Imam Ghazali to Iqbal, it was assessed with a philosophical approach, in order to understand the impact.

Iqbal was never away from natural phenomenon and world events. The problems of life and this world always struck his mind and eventually came out in the form of philosophical truths.. He gave vent to this in the form of his discourses, which assumed different fine art forms--poems, essays and oratory. By nature gifted, Iqbal worked on his poetry to make it appealing. His oratorical art was gifted as well, affecting audiences deeply. Iqbal had seen the western side closely and with time began to loathe the permissiveness in it that made light of familial and social values. His criticism of western culture was however constructive. He appreciated the scientific approach of western societies, the work culture as well. However, the negative trends he pointed to were borne of human experiences of centuries. The extreme materialism which drives man to attach a greater importance to matter than required is sign of human decay. The materialistic world considers man as a machine which in turn has led to

spiritual deprivation.. This lack of spirituality is described by Iqbal in following form:

Entangled in the labyrinth of science  
 Lost count of good and ill  
 Took captive the sun's rays and yet no survive  
 On life's thick night unfurled

Kiernan, 178

Iqbal's protest against western society was based on west's preference on materialistic view of life. Iqbal realised that modernism has turned man into an object which moves around the axis of body. A strong bifurcation of soul has been made from body which in turn has created void between soul, body and religion. Religion which was means of spiritual salvation has divided and degenerated people. To come out of this spiritual degeneration he writes,

"Humanity needs three things today -- a spiritual interpretation of universe, spiritual emancipation of the individual, and basic principles of a universal import directing the evolution of human society on a spiritual basis."

Reconstruction, 190

However he does not deprecate the intellectual progress of Europe rather he wants to emulate their success in other domains like science and technology. Appreciation and denunciation of elements of the western social order and its cultural premises continue to co-exist in Iqbalian judgement. According to Iqbal modern world stands in need of renewal of value system and religion in higher manifestation can alone ethically prepare the modern man for the same. As a Muslim he laid stress to follow Islam as a way of life which is great need of hour. For Iqbal, Islam is a living force freeing the outlook of man from its geographical limitation. He was of the view that "Islam is itself destiny and will not suffer a destiny". "He denounced nationalism, socialism, and considered them as weapons of European imperialism. Iqbal opposed all kinds of oppression which includes East by capitalistic Europe, of peasants by land owners, of workers by capitalists

For this he laid stress that a religion needs to play a vital and effective role. Iqbal takes Islam to be a unifying force and describes his views of community like this, "It is not the unity of language or country or the identity of economic interest that constitutes the basic principles of our nationality. It is because we all believe in a certain view of the universe and participate in the same historic tradition that we are members of the society founded by the Prophet of Islam (PBUH)."

Sherwani, 121

The present scenario of our society in all spheres is in itself sufficient to understand Iqbal's vision and relevance to contemporary times we are living in. In order to keep pace and be abreast with modern ideas and time, our culture should remain Muslim in character otherwise we will lose our identity and individuality.

Iqbal's vision was that young Muslims should aspire to become the ideal of Islam and demonstrate God's attributes as much as possible. Iqbal in his numerous poems put objective for Muslim reformers to have fresh orientation of the faith and freedom to reinterpret religion in the light of advancing experience. His contempt of traditional mullahs was well known. He describes true spiritual guide as more powerful and superior than a king. A true spiritual guide is a source

of strength while same is not the case with a king. A spiritual guide occupies loftier place in Gods assembly while than a king. He says:

Sheikh, who tend the holy shrine  
 Discard these monkish modes of thine  
 Grasp what morning songs denote  
 What aims or end I would promote

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These so called Moulvis and Mullahas failed to carry on the prophetic mission of disseminating authentic knowledge of Islam and serving as role models of piety and learning. Iqbal puts it like this:

The seer, inspired by God, who fails  
 To prompt to deeds of might and main,  
 Is just akin to leaf of hemp  
 That makes oblivious to loss or gain

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These verses clearly reveal Iqbal's belief that spiritual and ethical training of the masses should be in the hands of divine men. The present society is in need of such men. Emancipation of women is also one of the contemporary problems about which Iqbal wrote extensively and straightforwardly. The emancipation movement suffered badly owing to the misconceived notions of liberty. In his essay position of women in the east he says,

“What strikes me most is that courtesy towards the female sex, for which Europeans were at one time famous, is becoming atavistic. In the underground, men do not surrender their seats to ladies, or do so very seldom. In getting out of the car they have no thought of letting the ladies out first. I do not want to blame them The women themselves have brought it about. They wanted emancipation equal rights with the male sex. The change that has come was inevitable.”

Iqbal considered women as *sacred* and thereby atrocities of women disturbed him very much. He loathed the Turkish belief that women has a inferior role in family life. For him women was a symbol of greater respect and therefore should be protected. His message to protect women appears so aptly today when we see women as a victim of male dominance, sexual oppression as well as educational deprivation His relevance as amissionary poet is revealed by these lines

He is a man of his age  
 and a man in advance of his age ;

he is also a man in disagreement with his age”.

Nicholson, 25

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